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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews research conducted in the field of bilingual literacy from 1966 to June 1980. Citing numerous research works, it focuses on the contributions to the understanding of the development of English reading and writing skills by Hispanic pupils in the United States. Congress requires bilingual education programs to assist educationally disadvantaged, limited English proficiency (LEP) children. These programs are typically transition- or maintenance-oriented. Six research categories which affect literacy development are discussed: (1) instructional methodology, (2) interference and linguistic constructs, (3) psychological and social variables, (4) code breaking and initial reading, (5) writing, and (6) testing and evaluation. Based on the research cited, five generalizations are formed: (1) given adequate attention, LEP Hispanic children can attain a level of functional literacy adequate for monolingual English school programs; (2) the literacy development of children in bilingual programs stressing native language maintenance may vary but will equalize over time; (3) little is known about how literacy affects cognitive development; (4) little is known about how literacy skills in the native language are transferred to English language literacy development; and (5) research needs to be done on the written English language proficiency of LEP students. (JK)

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Literacy Development of Bilingual Children

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Congress has established a compensatory bilingual education program for limited English proficiency (LEP) pupils. As many as 3.5 million children and students in the United States primarily speak, read, and write a language other than English; about 85% of these pupils are Hispanic. These children and students are educationally disadvantaged because they cannot understand instruction traditionally given in English and are unable to meet the exit requirements necessary to receive a high school diploma. Bilingual education is designed to teach LEP pupils to understand, speak, read, and write English and to provide them with subject matter support in their native language while they are gaining English language proficiency. The purpose of bilingual education is to assist LEP pupils so that they can progress through school and can complete successfully a standard high school education prescribed by their local school district.

No two bilingual classes look alike, but generally, bilingual education programs can be characterized as follows, depending upon the socio-economic and political function of the program:

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1. Mixed classes - assimilation: This is the transition to English model; it is not aimed at dual language skills. LEP students are immersed in monolingual, English speaking classrooms. Some English as a second language instruction is provided. Bilingual programs which use this model are referred to as immersion programs.

2. Separate classes - assimilation: This is a modified transitional model where LEP pupils are in separate bilingual education classrooms for their academic course work, English language, mathematics, social studies, and science. Although the teacher and the aide, if available, are bilingual, the main emphasis is on learning to understand, speak, read, and write in English and to learn subject matter using both the English language and the pupils' native language. This model is characteristic of large urban schools where pupils can stay in the bilingual education classes until they can be placed into the monolingual English, regular school program.

3. Mixed classes - pluralism: This is a low-keyed maintenance model. It is most often considered to be the predominant bilingual education model even though the guidelines for federal funding require the transitional model. LEP pupils are supposedly placed in mixed classes, which rarely happens. Pupils are given English

language proficiency and native language proficiency instruction as well as subject matter instruction in both languages until they are ready to transfer to the monolingual English, regular school program.

4. Separate classes - pluralism: This is the most radical maintenance model which can be found in Indian and Chicano schools where the ethnic language and culture is used exclusively for instruction. English is supplemental.

In all of the models except the last one of those listed above, an LEP pupil is expected to make the transition into the monolingual English, regular program; most elementary school children in two years, most secondary school students in three years.

Bilingual eduation theory was relatively new when the bilingual education legislation was established in 1968. The legislation was intended to be a research and demonstration program and yet it was managed and adminstered as though it were an educational service program. Currently, it is an education service program intended as a capacity building program for funded projects in basic local and state programs and in institutions of higher education. The National Institute of Education is the current research arm of the newly created Office of Bilingual Education and Minority

Language Affairs.

Although bilingual education has been a legislated program since 1968, limited research is available on the topic of literacy development of LEP pupils. One problem lies in the politics of bilingual education. If the outcomes of the research tend to go counter to the intent of bilingual education, as was the case of the AIR report (1977), the research is quickly attacked on the basis of the soundness of the research design, the statistical analysis, or the cultural bias (Troike, 1977 and Horn, 1976). The mobility of the LEP population, particularly children of migrant workers and the complexity of research design in bilingual literacy contribute to the dearth of research in the area. This search of the research literature in bilingual literacy covers the period of 1966 to June, 1980. The citations are from actual research studies or from authors who consider themselves researchers.

For the purposes of this paper, bilingual refers to Spanish and English languages, literacy development refers to reading and writing skills, and bilingual children refers to limited English proficiency children who have the potential for becoming bilingual because of their ethnic and linguistic origins and the non-English language spoken in the home, church, and community.

The research categories affecting literacy development to be discussed in this paper include: 1) instructional methodology; 2) interference and linguistic constructs; 3) psychological and sociological variables; 4) code breaking and initial reading; 5) testing, evaluation, and statistics; and 6) writing.

A word of caution is needed before progressing into the six research areas which tend to describe the literacy development of LEP pupils: 1) A pupil who can read and write Spanish is literate in Spanish. A pupil who can read and write English is literate in English. Literacy development programs which ask a low-income, economically and linguistically disadvantaged pupil to become bilingual is asking of that pupil twice as much as is asked of the pupil who is a native speaker of English. 2) Nationally, including Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii, there are three and a half million LEP pupils who are successfully learning to become literate in at least English. 3) This paper focuses on the English literacy development of Hispanic pupils. 4) Given the universalities of language and child language development, it would be anticipated that problems encountered by native English-speaking children are also going to be present for the non-native speaker of English learning to read English.

Instructional Methodology

The most abundant research on the literacy development of LEP pupils is in the area of instructional methodology. Descriptions of reading programs generally stress the teaching of English reading in a bilingual education classroom with emphasis on oral language instruction, content reading, criterion-referenced testing, norm-referenced testing, informal reading inventories, readability formulas, and reading diagnosis (Parrish, 1979). Early reading in a preschool dual language program is described by Lado and Andersson (1979). In this project early English reading was used for language development among normal hearing and hearing-impaired Hispanic children. Preschool Spanish and English language reading and speaking were used for language acquisition in the two languages.

Little is known about the transfer of reading skills from one language to another for children whose native language is not English (Natilicio, 1976). We do know, however, that children who are good readers in their native language will be good readers in their second language. The reverse also applies. Most bilingual reading instruction programs involve immediate immersion into English reading or native language reading

instruction first, few if any teach similar skills from both languages concurrently. Research is needed in understanding the transfer of reading skills from one language to another for determining a "best" English reading method for LEP pupils.

Carolyn Ebel (1978) observed English as a second language classes in twenty-five public and private schools to determine classroom practices in teaching English reading to LEP pupils with Puerto Rican background. Her findings conclude that: 1) no particular method or approach was prevalent in the classes, 2) oral reading was not practiced in any of the classrooms, 3) teachers did not integrate culturally relevant information into the reading lessons, 4) there was little evidence of visual materials or pupil writing on display in the classrooms, and 5) a high degree of apathy was exhibited by the teachers.

Recent research into the relationship between cultural background and cognitive style (Dixon, 1977) suggests that Mexican-American children typically display a "field dependent" cognitive style as opposed to the "field independent" cognitive style of Anglophone children. Dixon suggests that teachers should take all of this into consideration in developing their reading instruction strategies. Physical distance should be reduced

between teacher and Chicano pupil. Peer and cross-age teaching methods should be used with Chicano pupils. Language experience and cooperation are encouraged for Chicano pupils. Mexican-American pupils also thrive in discussion classes rather than in lecture classes and they respond to social rewards such as smiles and compliments rather than to the abstract reward of grades. Since reading instruction strategies tend to reflect good teaching practices, they should not be limited only to the field-dependent Mexican-American pupils. The field-independent, Anglophone pupils also deserve these teaching strategies when appropriate to their learning styles.

In research comparing the language experience approach to teaching English reading with a basal reader approach for migrant, Mexican-American pupils (Carline and Hoffman, 1976), it was shown that there was a slight but not significant gain for language experience approach migrant children over basal reader approach migrant children.

The dialog method of cooperation and close communication for learning English as a second language was adapted (Hayden, 1977) for general use in elementary and junior high schools with a large percentage of

Spanish-speaking student with low reading scores. Pretest and posttest reading scores as a result of the treatment did not show a significant difference.

In order to determine whether instruction by tutoring of third grade, Mexican-American, inner city children in vocabulary meaning would improve reading scores (Larson, 1975), data was collected on 78 children. The experimental group received tutoring in English vocabulary while the control group got mathematics concepts. Both groups received English reading instruction. No significant difference in English reading was found between the two groups.

Wooden and Pettibone (1973) in a comparative study of three beginning English reading programs for the Spanish-speaking child conclude that the important factors for success are careful diagnosis for each child, specific emphasis on each language skill, such as listening comprehension, spatial relations, and auditory association. Incorporating these factors into a reading program for Spanish-speaking children can be increased significantly.

While the controversy rages on choosing the language for initial reading instruction (Prewitt-Diaz, 1979) native language, second language, or dual language, the research tends to be pointing to specific answers.

At the first grade level (Canseco, 1978) tells us in her research that there is no apparent advantage or disadvantage for bilingual, first grade, dual language readers. Her finding also demonstrates the effectiveness of the native language approach. Huzar (1973) has indicated that given an experimental group of Puerto Rican second and third graders who received Spanish and English reading instruction and a like control group that received only English instruction indicated no significant difference between both groups in an English reading test, grades 2 and 3. In learning to read Spanish first, the teacher behavior tends to affect student reading achievement in Spanish (Ramírez, 1979).

In a study in progress at The Pennsylvania State University of language choice for initial reading, grades 1, 3 and 5, the preliminary results show that over the five year period, the dual language approach produces an English reading deficit at the fifth grade level compared with similar children who started in an English only program. In other words, both groups start at a similar point in their English reading, but by the fifth grade, the English only group reads English significantly better than the dual language group.

Interference and Linguistic Constraints

Linguistic interference, both productive and receptive, has received substantial research attention in the study of literacy development of LEP pupils. Most of the research in the field of English reading tends to break down previously held notions about the importance of interference in language learning.

In a study of developmental reading behaviors (Gonzales and Elijah, 1979), errors of 75 Spanish/English bilingual students, grades 2-9 were categorized in an attempt to determine a pattern of language difficulties. It was found that bilingual readers minimally used Spanish language clues in reading English materials.

In a study predicting beginning reading from oral language performance, Kaminsky (1977) collected free speech samples and oral cloze test scores from 24 Spanish surnamed children at the beginning of grade one. The pupils learned to read in Spanish and English. Speech samples in Spanish and English were grouped for high, medium, and low syntactic density. Children with high or medium syntactic density in Spanish or English were more likely to be reading well (at or near grade level) in that respective language. Some children with high syntactic density of one language, for example Spanish, were learning to read in both languages.

Williams and Young (1976) administered the Reading Miscue Inventory (RMI) to analyze English reading performance of 60 subjects, ten bilingual and ten monolingual 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. Monolinguals demonstrated more sensitivity to grammatical and semantic clues. Miscues of monolinguals was less likely to result in a comprehension loss than were miscues of bilinguals.

Data was collected (Springer, 1975) on 52, first grade Puerto Rican children in order to determine how English auditory discrimination affected reading achievement. Results showed a significant correlation of standard English auditory phonological discrimination and reading achievement on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. The findings of Lombard and Harvey (1977) confirm the Springer findings.

Studies by Mathewson and Pereyra (1975) and Lucas and Singer (1975) indicate that Spanish language interference at the phonemic level does not carry into English reading comprehension; however, Spanish language interference at the syntactic level does adversely affect English reading comprehension. Ziro (1976) suggests that the main interference in English reading of Hispanic pupils may not be linguistic at all but rather socioeconomic.

Psychological and Sociological Variables

Some research has been done investigating the psychological and sociological variables which affect English reading achievement. The outcomes are not clear but show tendencies. Johnson (1979) concludes that the English reading achievement of Hispanic migrant children can be predicted by their level of self-concept. Goslin (1978) found that self-concept was the best predictor of pupil achievement in English reading, science, and social studies. Borges (1975) asserts that the best predictor of English reading achievement of Puerto Rican LEP pupils is socioeconomic status. Bassin (1978) found that participants in a 20 week program of specific motor activities by 22 Mexican-American children (6-8 years old) resulted in no significant improvement in the subjects' English reading improvement.

Does ethnic group affect English reading performance? Attention span of Mexican-American pupils tends to affect significantly their English reading achievement (Sherfey, 1976). Fiege and Laila (1975) found that Black English-speaking children and standard English-speaking children, average third graders, had similar English reading performance results. However, Mexican-American children made more substitutions but showed

the best English reading comprehension performance. Best (1978) administered Spanish and English lesson-specific science vocabulary to both Mexican-American pupils and Anglophone pupils. The pupils who profited most from this treatment were the Anglophone pupils. The Anglophone pupils who received both Spanish and English science vocabulary reinforcement did better on their science test than did the Anglophone pupils who received the science vocabulary reinforcement in English only. It is becoming evident that cognitive development is enhanced by literacy development in two languages.

Code Breaking and Initial Reading

A few researchers have attempted to study the code breaking and initial reading skills of LEP children. John Downing (1979) has shown evidence of using the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) as an effective tool in teaching English reading to bilingual students. His point of view is theoretical and descriptive rather than quantitative. Tupper and Roberson (1975) have followed up on Downing's suggestion and have actually taught English reading using ITA with Mexican-American children. They show significant gains in initial English read by Hispanic pupils introduced to reading through the initial teaching alphabet.

Reading specialists include the use of context clues in their reading process theory for native English-speaking children learning to read English. Lopez (1979) reports that second grade Spanish-speaking children also use context clues when learning to read Spanish.

Writing

Very little research has been done on the writing of LEP Hispanic pupils. Golub (1975) compared the syntactic density found in the oral and written language samples of Hispanic, black, Indian, and low socioeconomic white children. The only group to vary significantly from the low-economic white children were the black children not the Hispanic, even though English was their second language.

Ney (1977) compared the writing miscues of three Hispanic children to the writing miscues of their Anglophone classmates. Miscues were obtained through samples of writing taken from different sentence combining exercises. Results of the comparison suggest that the Hispanic children in Arizona did not make writing miscues that were qualitatively different from Anglophone Arizona children.

Paviolo (1979) using writing samples of third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade LEP Puerto Rican children in Pennsylvania and an equal number of Hispanic, Puerto Rican children on the Island devised a Spanish, syntactic density score formula based on the principles used by Golub and Kidder (1974) in the development of the syntactic density score formula. Paviolo also displays optimum syntactic density scores of both Island and mainland Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican children.

Research on the written literacy development of low-income children, Hispanic, black, and Indian is conspicuously lacking in the research literature.

Testing and Evaluation

The angry shouts over cultural bias against the Hispanic child in norm-referenced reading tests are still heard. However, the shouts are the results of emotional outbursts rather than logical analysis. Canseco (1978) gave the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) to groups of Anglophone and Hispanic pupils. The Hispanics did not appear to miss any particular items more than the Anglophones. She concludes that no test bias was apparent in regard to the use of the CTBS. Lubaus (1979) has carefully analyzed the Gates-MacGuinitie and the InterAmerican

Reading Tests by giving them to groups of Hispanic and Anglophone pupils. One item in the Gates-MacGuinitie was biased against the Anglophone pupils who tended consistently to miss a Latinate word which was always known by the Hispanic pupils. The reading portion of the Language Assessment Battery is biased against Puerto Rican children who live outside of New York City since the reading selections in this test use the content of the growing up in New York City. Lubaus has also shown that both the Gates-MacGuinitie and the InterAmerican Reading Tests are equally reliable and valid for use with Hispanic pupils. The Gates-MacGuinitie appears somewhat simpler for them than the InterAmerican. She also claims that the low reliability of reading achievement on tests taken by Hispanic pupils results from their test-taking strategies.

Some Considerations

The research over the past fourteen years dealing with literacy development of bilingual children has not yet reached maturity. A few generalizations we do know:

1. Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Hispanic children show respect and given special, specific instruction will learn to read and to write English well enough to function in regular monolingual English school programs and in most cases they will function as well as their Anglophone peers.

2. Children who are in dual language programs for the purpose of maintaining the native language (Spanish) might at some points in their education, slow down in their English literacy development. But eventually there is an equalization of literacy development in both languages. A student's having literacy in two languages is a human resource which outweighs the possibility of a student's measured deceleration in English literacy, particularly during the middle school and junior high school years.

3. Very little if anything is known about how LEP pupils use English literacy (reading and writing) for cognitive development in subject matter learning.

4. We know very little, if anything, about how literacy skills learned for native language proficiency are transferred to English language literacy development.

5. Written English language proficiency of LEP pupils needs instructional attention and research from researcher and teachers alike.

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